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Elaine Steinbeck tapped virtually every source in her effort to gather the 5,000 or so letters written by her husband, Novelist John Steinbeck, to publish in her forthcoming book, *Steinbeck: A Life in Letters* (Viking, \$15). "There was one source we missed," says the author's widow. "We never thought of the CIA." John Steinbeck's name turned up recently on a list of prominent U.S. citizens whose foreign correspondence had been opened and copied by the agency. Even without the CIA's help, Steinbeck and Collaborator Robert Wallsten, a family friend and writer, have put together about 700 chronological letters to friends, family, wives, girl friends, children—even Presidents. "John wrote about politics, sex, love, child rearing—just everything," reveals his widow. Mrs. Steinbeck, who will discuss the book with the ex-New York City may-

or and rookie interviewer John Lindsay on ABC's *AM America*, says that the later letters show a "mature and simple style." But the early stuff, written when Steinbeck was in his 20s, is "purple prose."